

Level 2

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. There are six hospital dialysis units in Scotland situated at:-

Glasgow (3 units)	Western Infirmary Royal Infirmary Stobhill Hospital
Aberdeen (1 unit)	Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
Dundee (1 unit)	Maryfield Hospital
Edinburgh (1 unit)	Royal Infirmary (with machines at the Western General related solely to support of transplant patients).

2. There are various forms of "infectious jaundice" which are recognised to be constantly present among the population of Scotland. The presence of viral hepatitis occurring in hospital dialysis units must be seen against this background. It is believed that "infectious jaundice" is at present more prevalent generally in Edinburgh than in Glasgow, Aberdeen or Dundee.

3. No cases of viral hepatitis in either patients or staff have been reported from the dialysis units at Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee. In the Edinburgh complex, comprising the Medical Renal Unit at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh and the Nuffield Transplantation Surgical Unit at the Western General Hospital, two cases of viral hepatitis were reported before 1969, but since June 1969 there have been 18 cases in dialysis patients and six cases in people who have had contact with dialysis patients. Four of these contacts were members of staff and two were relatives of patients receiving dialysis treatment.

4. Since June 1969 four patients out of the 18 affected and one member of staff have died as a result of hepatitis. There has also been a death of a clerkess employed in the haematology department at the Western General Hospital. This has attracted some publicity but as yet it is not possible to say whether this death can be linked with the others.

5. Since the Edinburgh unit opened in 1963, 75 patients have been admitted to the dialysis programme. The number of patients under treatment at any one time is approximately 30.

6. This recent incidence of hepatitis in Edinburgh is not the first of its kind in a dialysis unit in the United Kingdom. The risk of contracting this disease is a recognised hazard associated with dialysis units and efforts are being made to develop techniques (viz using a separate coil for each patient) which will minimise the risk.

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